

CIA Elaborately Tracked Columnist

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Four Central Intelligence Agency operatives moved secretly to tables in the expensive Montpelier Room of the Madison Hotel here about noon on March 17, 1972, as part of what the CIA then described as an "extremely sensitive" operation called "Project Mudhen."

The agents were there to watch their boss, CIA director Richard

Helms, eat lunch with a man known in the project under the code name of "Brandy." Brandy was nationally syndicated columnist Jack Anderson, who was being spied on by the CIA in a three-month, unsuccessful agency attempt to determine the sources of his news stories.

According to the highly classified report the agents filed on the lunch: "... (T)hey lunched and engaged in a rather animated conversation. Brandy

and the director departed the restaurant at 1338 hours. Brandy returned, on foot, to his office."

Additional agents posted outside the hotel during the lunch said they found "no indication of possible hostile countersurveillance. Neither patrons nor that establishment's staff exhibited any particular interest towards the director or Brandy."

The details of the spying on the luncheon meeting are included in files

that have been turned over to Anderson under a Freedom of Information request by the columnist. Helms was aware of the spying on the lunch and had approved it beforehand to make certain that Anderson wasn't bugging him.

The stack of CIA files compiled on Anderson is more than four inches thick and included vast amounts of information on the backgrounds and

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movements of Anderson and other members of his reporting staff.

The notes of the surveillances, made in hand on previously prepared "logs" on which movements of persons are charted in hourly segments, include observations from a "photographic observation nest" at 16th and K Streets NW, near the office Anderson was using at the time.

Anderson is using portions of the material as evidence in a \$22 million civil suit he has filed against Richard Nixon and other past and present government officials, as well as against government agencies such as the CIA. He is claiming in his suit that the agencies and officials committed various illegal acts and violated his constitutional rights to free speech and privacy.

The suit is pending before U.S. District Judge Gerhard A. Gesell, who has ordered the government agencies to answer questions about their spying activities against Anderson. Gesell also has raised questions about the propriety of the Justice Department's legal representation of various former government officials who might have

differing interests in the civil suit.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome of the pending litigation, the CIA files released so far provide unusual details of a domestic surveillance of a U.S. citizen by the nation's overseas intelligence agency.

The files are complete with code names and other terminology associated with the spy system, and occasionally include somewhat humorous accountings of incidents such as the time members of Anderson's own family tracked down and took pictures of the government agents who were assigned to monitor their activities. On another occasion, agents decided on their own to stop watching Anderson's movements because of "bad weather."

Also included in the files are hand-drawn maps of neighborhoods where Anderson and his employees lived, with certain locations marked as "possible observation posts." Photographs taken by hidden surveillance squads also are included in the documents.

The spying operation was approved by the CIA Director of Security, Howard Osborn, in January, 1972, after Anderson published materials based

on classified documents in his nationally syndicated column, according to the files.

It continued until April 12, 1972. At that time, the CIA concluded that the surveillance should be stopped because it had been carried on too long, was unfruitful, and the agency was "suspicious that Anderson was aware of the operation."

One of the stated purposes of the operation was to collect information files. To accomplish the task of watching the "behavioral patterns" of Anderson and his staff, according to the ing Anderson and his staff, the agency assigned as many as 16 agents in eight cars on any given day to glean such information as the fact that Anderson associate Les Whitten—code-named "Cordial"—"leaves" office, picks up lunch, eats alone at Farragut Square," according to the logs of the surveillances.

Anderson secretary Opal Ginn became "Sherry" in the CIA code system, Anderson reporter Joseph Spears became "Champagne," and reporter Brit Hume became "Eggnog." Although the agents were seeking information on the personal lives of the re-

porters, the most they could determine about Spears and his wife were that they "appear to maintaining a rather routine pattern of professional activities."

The Montpelier Room luncheon exemplifies the steps the CIA took in its monitoring of Anderson. The agency concluded that since Anderson had been seen using small, visible tape recorders, "he would readily use audio capabilities. This would certainly include bodily concealed recorders, and/or concealed transmitting devices," the agency added.

The report on the luncheon also noted that Anderson parked his car in the Madison Hotel and "it could be concluded that Brandy... could readily enlist the cooperation of certain hotel employees in effecting his endeavor." The purpose of the lunch was an attempt by Helms to talk Anderson out of printing classified information in a book Anderson was writing, the agency said.

Anderson and other members of his staff were described in the CIA documents in colorful terms such as "flamboyant, brash, stentorian, and committed."

For example, Whitten, according to CIA agents who followed him, "operates his personal automobile in a fast, impatient manner and will deviate from normal routes in order to avoid minor traffic delays."

The only information the CIA said it passed on to other agencies concerned a contact between Anderson's secretary Ginn and someone who worked for the Air Force. Although the source of that information was the CIA stakeout, the Secretary of the Air Force was informed only that the contact had been observed by chance by a CIA employee who happened to recognize Ginn and took down "out of curiosity" the tag number of the car she was entering.

Although most of the surveillance of Anderson and his staff occurred in Washington, agents followed him to Seton Hall College in New Jersey to monitor a speech in which they said he "never singled out the agency for particular attention."

In fact, the agents reported to their superior, Anderson "concluded his discourse by declaring that our government is the best in the world."